Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (original): A method for preparing a tablet, comprising the steps of:

forming an aqueous slurry containing a mixture of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake and silicon dioxide having a particle size from about 1 nm to about 100 μm;

drying said slurry to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight;

mixing an active ingredient with said excipient in a ratio from about 1:99 to about 99:1 to obtain a mixture;

compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 2. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said silicon dioxide is colloidal silicon dioxide, and further comprising wet granulating said mixture prior to compressing said mixture into said tablet.

Claim 3. (canceled)

Claim 4. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying is accomplished via spray drying such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 30 μm to about 250 μm.

Claim 5. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the resultant excipient particles have a bulk density from about 0.2 g/ml to about 0.6 g/ml.

Claim 6. (canceled)

Claim 7. (original): The method of claim 2, further comprising adding a further amount of said excipient to said wet granulated mixture, prior to compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 8. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 15%.

Claims 9. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 2.5 %.

Claim 10. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 1.8%.

Claim 11. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.5%.

Claim 12. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.2%.

Claim 13. (original): A method for preparing a pharmaceutical excipient, comprising:

forming an aqueous slurry containing a mixture of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake and silicon dioxide having a surface area from about 10 m^2/g to about 500 m^2/g, wherein said slurry comprises from about 0.5% to about 25% by weight microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake; and

drying said slurry to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight.

Claims 14-15 (canceled)

Claim 16. (original): The method of claim 13, wherein said silicon dioxide is colloidal silicon dioxide.

Claim 17. (canceled)

Claim 18. (original): The method of claim 13, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry of microcrystalline cellulose and silicon dioxide by spray drying.

Claim 19. (original): The method of claim 13, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 10 μm to about 1,000 μm.

Claims 20 -25 (canceled)

Claim 26. (original): The method of claim 13, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a particle size of from about 30 μm to about 250 μm.

Claim 27. (original): The method of claim 13, wherein said slurry further comprises a member of the group consisting of non-silicon metal oxides, starches, starch derivatives, surfactants, polyalkylene oxides, cellulose, celluloses, celluloses ethers, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 28. (original): A method for preparing a pharmaceutical excipient, comprising:

forming an aqueous slurry containing a mixture of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake and silicon dioxide having an average primary particle size from about 1 nm to about 100 μm, wherein said slurry comprises from about 0.5% to about 25% by weight microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake, the solids content of said slurry being from about 0.5% to

about 25%, by weight; and,

drying said slurry to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight.

Claim 29. (original): The method of claim 28, wherein said slurry contains from about 15% to about 20% microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake.

Claim 30. (canceled)

Claim 31. (original): The method of claim 28, wherein said silicon dioxide is colloidal silicon dioxide.

Claims 32-34 (original)

Claim 35. (original): The method of claim 28, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 2.5 %.

Claims 36-38 (canceled)